

Freedom and Moratorium: The Fiction of Walking in *The Prelude*

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Introduction

Wordsworth's autobiographical epic *The Prelude*¹ begins with the scene of his walking tour to Grasmere, a village in the Lake District, and ends with a retrospective episode of his climb of Snowdon. Biographically, the beginning scene corresponds to his tour of the Lake District in the autumn of 1799, and the climb of Snowden took place in the summer of 1791, when he was in his third year at Cambridge University. This kind of arbitrary arrangement of episodic events appears often in *The Prelude*, making this work unique in structure, but occasionally difficult to read. M. H. Abrams, studying the peculiarity of the structure of *The Prelude*, notices that it has "a circular organization," pointing out that the last book of *The Prelude* shows symmetry with the first book in that both scenes present a literal walk as a metaphor for a spiritual or imaginative journey. He argues that *The Prelude* has "a circular organization" not only because it starts and ends with walking, but also because the textual wayfaring that Wordsworth employs also describes his spiritual wayfaring (278-92). His point of view is quite important in reminding us that the image of walking forms a leading motif in *The Prelude*.

In recent studies, many critics have addressed the subject of Wordsworth and walking from both literary and social viewpoints. It is well known that the poet was a vigorous walker. Robin Jarvis studies the relationship between Romantic writing and the Romantic writer's partiality for walking, and places Wordsworth in the centre of this tendency. According to him, Wordsworth's era is marked by "the rise of pedestrianism" (1). The walking scenes depicted so often in his poetical text as well as constant references to walking in his letters and in his sister Dorothy's journals impress upon us that the means of movement in his era was first and foremost walking. Wordsworth's lifetime (1770-1850), however, was also marked by great progress in transport on land in Great Britain; the first half by the establishment and the progress of the mail-coach system, and the latter half by the launch of the railway business. Taking these backgrounds into account, we can see the significance of the poet's fixation on walking in a different light. It is clear that many of his long distance trips were done by ways other than walking. In spite of the fact that in *The Prelude* Wordsworth describes such trips several times, including two continental tours, the poet is not so eager to elaborate on any means of transportation other than walking. Of course, his visit to Grasmere depicted in Book 1 was, in reality, not conducted all on foot. Therefore, it is natural to suppose that artistic manipulation intervenes here. My aim in this paper is to show what kind of manipulation related to the descriptions of transport Wordsworth performs in *The Prelude*, and to demonstrate how the images of walking, wandering, and vagrancy in the text contribute to the birth of the highly experimental and revolutionary work, *The Prelude*.

1. Transport by Coach: Individuality and System

It is only twice in the whole text of *The Prelude* that Wordsworth's travel by carriage is depicted clearly: in Book 3 and Book 8. This seems too scarce when compared with the abundance of the descriptions of his walking travels; these two scenes, however, have more significance in quality than in quantity. The poet's travel by carriage first appears at the beginning of Book 3, when the seventeen-year-old Wordsworth enters the town of Cambridge as a freshman of St. John's College, riding in a chaise, a carriage for travelling, accompanied by his uncle

William Cookson, who was a fellow of the college:

It was a dreary morning when the Chaise
 Roll'd over the flat Plains of Huntingdon
 And, through the open windows, first I saw
 The long-back'd Chapel of King's College rear
 His pinnacle above the dusky groves.

Soon afterwards, we espied upon the road
 A Student cloth'd in Gown and tassel'd Cap;
 He pass'd; nor was I master of my eyes
 Till he was left a hundred yards behind.
 The Place, as we approach'd, seem'd more and more
 To have an eddy's force, and suck'd us in
 More eagerly at every step we took.
 Onward we drove beneath the Castle; down
 By Magdalene Bridge we went, and cross'd the Cam,
 And at the Hoop we landed, famous Inn! (3, 1-15)

What is remarkable in this passage is the effect that the visual impression produces. Through the open window of the chaise, "the pinnacle" of "the long-back'd Chapel of King's College" comes into Wordsworth's eyes first, then, "A Student cloth'd in Gown and tassel'd Cap" catches his eye. Soon, the chaise crosses the Cam, and then it arrives at the inn where he is going to stay. Showing the swiftly changing scenery seen from the carriage window with vivid descriptions, he skillfully expresses the rapidity and efficiency of a carriage as a means of transport. Readers can see the Cambridge student with a gown and a tasseled cap as if they were riding on the chaise with Wordsworth. Besides, the student who wears the trappings of collegiate privilege must have elated young Wordsworth who would soon be placed among the same students. In this scene, the carriage is used effectively as a means to express the exaltation of a youth who enters into a new stage of life.

The next travel by carriage appears at the end of Book 8, in which the poet tells his memory of his first entry into London after his graduation from Cambridge in

1791:

Never shall I forget the hour,
 The moment rather say, when, having thridded
 The labyrinth of suburban Villages,
 At length I did unto myself first seem
 To enter the great City. On the Roof
 Of an itinerant Vehicle I sate,
 With vulgar men about me, vulgar forms
 Of houses, pavements, streets, of men and things,
 Mean shapes on every side: but at that time
 When to myself it fairly might be said
 The very moment that I seem'd to know
 The threshold now is overpass'd—Great God!
 That aught external to the living mind
 Should have such mighty sway! yet so it was— (8, 689-702)

This entry is actually Wordsworth's second entry into London,² but he describes his excitement at entering the city as if it were his first. In doing so, the poet conveys his excitement at a change in the situation, because in this second visit, he has left Cambridge and decided to find a new way of life in London. Therefore, the visual impression plays an important role in this part as well as in Book 3. He is sitting on the roof of a kind of stage-coach observing endless rows of houses and the crowded streets of the great city. The scenery of the metropolis seems unfamiliar and impressive to him, a young man who was raised in the remote regions of England and has resided in the quietude of the towers of Cambridge, and he feels a sort of divine power has operated on him. The poet admits that the scenery which he saw then from the itinerant vehicle was no more than an ordinary, vulgar sight of London, when he looks back to that event in a later and more matured, composed mind. This retrospective view suggests that his first impression of London was so overwhelming that he could not help but see the scenes before him as they were presented one after another.

It should be mentioned here that Wordsworth is a poet who particularly fears

being dominated by sense, especially by sight. In Book 11 of *The Prelude*, he warns of the despotic power of sight on the human mind:

The state to which I now allude was one
 In which the eye was master of the heart;
 When that which is in every stage of life
 The most despotic of our senses gain'd
 Such strength in me as often held my mind
 In absolute dominion. (11, 171-6)

It is clear that he fears the visual power which tends to dominate the human heart and stop the functions of imagination; it is also true, however, that he often uses visual expressions quite effectively in his poems. The carriage scenes in Book 3 and Book 8 show the power of sight to catch the human heart and master it. This mastering power of sight is used in the situation in which a country boy goes to Cambridge, the centre of academism, and London, the capital city of the nation. The rapidity of a carriage offers Wordsworth convenience in travel, and what is more important, it gives him the surprise or excitement brought on by the rapid changes of situations. Thus, in these two scenes of carriage transport in *The Prelude*, the sight which is "the most despotic of our senses" easily combines with the rapid transport which is enabled by carriages and halts other mental functions. Wordsworth skillfully connects carriages and the sights to express the impact which the scenery of Cambridge and of London first has on his mind and the resulting subordination of the mind to the eyes.

The subordination of mind related to carriages in needs further discussion from another point of view. Systematized carriage services demand the proper maintenance of roads and vehicles, and above all, such well-organized services of public transport require the administrative initiative and the technological advances which enable the development of that kind of infrastructure. It was in 1784, three years before Wordsworth's entering Cambridge, that the first mail-coach service began in Great Britain by the instrumentality of John Palmer, a theatre owner in Bath. Palmer felt the need to improve the postal service in Britain, which was surprisingly in poor condition for the country which had to "meet the growing de-

mands of industry".³ He worked on William Pitt, then Chancellor of the Exchequer to adopt his plan to improve the existing mail delivery system, and eventually accomplished his aim of establishing the national mail delivery service by the mail-coach system. Thus, Wordsworth's school days coincide with the foundation and development of the mail-coach system. It is not surprising that this development of the land transport in the late 18th century in Britain had a great impact on the English Romantic writers.

According to Jarvis, who shows that the Romantic era was a period of a great progress of coach services citing studies of transport historians, stage-coaches and mail-coaches were too expensive for the common people to use. Those rapid, long-distance carriages for travel "were still the preserves of small social elite" (20-1). Carriage travel was a sign of one's social status. We can see interesting descriptions which tell us about the intimacy between the transport by carriage and the social status in an essay written by Thomas De Quincey, "The English Mail-Coach, or the Glory of Motion." He was fifteen years Wordsworth's junior and spent his youth in the prime of the mail-coach business. In his essay, he describes with humour Oxford students' snobbery and elitism in those days, when they used mail-coaches, a feeling which to some extent he shared with them.⁴

Moreover, De Quincey's essay is interesting because it mentions that the mail-coach system served to enhance nationalism in Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. He praises its mission to convey the news of victory throughout Britain during the war period as "the grandest chapter of our experience, within the whole mail-coach service" (423). The scene of the departures of mail-coaches in front of the General Post Office in Lombard Street in the City of London is the highlight:

Every moment are shouted aloud by the Post-Office servants the great ancestral names of cities known to history through a thousand years, – Lincoln, Winchester, Portsmouth, Gloucester, Oxford, Bristol, Manchester, York, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Perth, Glasgow – expressing the grandeur of the mail establishment by the diffusive radiation of its separate missions. That sound to each individual mail is the signal for drawing off, which process is the finest part of the entire spectacle. (424)

The names of major cities throughout Britain from the southernmost Portsmouth to the northern Glasgow indicate the growing centralization of information through the governmental network of mail-coaches and the accompanying formation of a national sense in people. People in those days shared the sense that every city in Britain was linked together by the mail-coach network. Benedict Anderson argues that "print-capitalism" made a great contribution to the formation of modern nationalism (36). Viewed in this light, it is reasonable to suppose that the mail-coach system in Britain enabled swift distribution of news and helped "print-capitalism" to foster nationalism among people in Britain. In "The English Mail-Coach," De Quincey grasps the nature of the times in tones of pompous praise of the Empire.

In *The Prelude* as well, the descriptions of travel by carriage in Books 3 and 8 suggest the existence of the Empire behind them which serves to control the individual under the system of State. As we have seen, the carriage travels in *The Prelude* take the direction toward the centre from the countryside, impressing young Wordsworth with the splendor and the noise of the centre.⁵ It seems, however, that the poet in his youth did not share the feelings of snobbish complacency and nationalism when he used carriages as De Quincey did. At least, it is apparent that he did not feel like boasting the privilege of using "his majesty's mail" (De Quincey 410). Contrary to De Quincey, it is likely that Wordsworth felt some kind of restlessness when he used carriages. In Books 3 and 8 of *The Prelude*, being attracted and exalted by the scenery seen from carriages, the poet nevertheless feels certain kind of uneasiness and confusion about that means of transport: "That aught external to the living mind/ Should have such mighty sway!" (8, 701-2) and "The Place, as we approach'd, seem'd more and more/ To have an eddy's force, and suck'd us in/ More eagerly at every step we took" (3, 10-12). The mechanical power of the carriage deprives the young poet of reflection, and instead presses the external scenes upon his mind. Far from being complacent, he is embarrassed at being transported mechanically and feels anxiety about the resulting subordination of his mind to the system in which he is inevitably involved. Wordsworth's descriptions of carriages in *The Prelude* suggest that he found an invasive power in the carriage transport system which reduces individuals to mere components of society.

2. Transport by Walking: Seeking Self-Identity

The descriptions of carriage transport in *The Prelude* suggest the growing centralization of communication and the resulting enhancement of nationalism in Britain in the late 18th century. Wordsworth, a country-raised boy, is brought by carriage from the remote countryside to the centre, from the personal space to the public one. *The Prelude* opens, however, with a walking journey which goes in the completely opposite direction:

Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze
 That blows from the green fields and from the clouds
 And from the sky; it beats against my cheek
 And seems half conscious of the joy it gives.
 O welcome Messenger! O welcome Friend!
 A Captive greets thee, coming from a house
 Of bondage, from yon City's walls set free,
 A prison where he has been long immured.
 Now I am free, enfranchis'd and at large,
 May fix my habitation where I will.
 What dwelling shall receive me? In what Vale
 Shall be my harbour? Underneath what grove
 Shall I take up my home, and what sweet stream
 Shall with its murmurs lull me to my rest?
 The earth is all before me (1, 1-15)

This beginning of *The Prelude*, which is known as the "Glad Preamble," includes some fictions. It describes Wordsworth's trip to Grasmere in the autumn of 1799, when he visited the Lake District with S. T. Coleridge. While staying there, he was attracted by Dove Cottage in Grasmere. So after Coleridge left the Lakes, Wordsworth revisited Grasmere, and this trip is the source of the "Glad Preamble." In fact, however, he walked to Grasmere from Ullswater village on this trip; therefore, the phrase "from yon City's walls set free" (1, 7) is somewhat deceptive. There is no city with walls in the Lake District.⁶

Then, let us consider what effects such fictional modification produces. What we should notice in the beginning scene of *The Prelude* is that the poet stresses that he is free by repetition. Having escaped from the city's walls, Wordsworth, who is walking to Grasmere, enjoys the feeling that he is emancipated in body and soul, being greeted by the gentle breeze. On the other hand, the inside of the walls is called "a prison." The city thus functions as a symbol of bondage and restraint, so escaping from the city means acquiring freedom:

I breathe again;
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind
Come fast upon me: it is shaken off,
As by miraculous gift 'tis shaken off,
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day
Not mine, and such as were not made for me. (1, 19-25)

What is described above is the process of retrieval of his true self. The false self, which was formed during the oppressed years represented by the word city, is shaken off in the course of walking from the city to the countryside, and his true self is recovered. This makes a clear contrast with his travels by carriage in the reverse direction as depicted in Books 3 and 8. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the poet creates a fictional city's wall in the scenery of the Lakes to dramatize the theme of recovering his true self.

In order to show the theme of the recovery through walking, Wordsworth adopts an ingenious device in the "Glad Preamble." In reality, we are not informed that his trip to Grasmere is done by walking until we proceed deep into the poem. The words which clearly show that he is walking do not appear until around line 70:

Whereat, being not unwilling now to give
A respite to this passion, I paced on
Gently, with careless steps, and came ere long
To a green shady pace where down I sate

Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice
And settling into gentler happiness. (1, 68-73)

In this passage, readers learn that the poet is walking definitely by the words "I paced on" and "with careless steps." However, readers are already led to be vaguely aware that he is walking by the earlier line, "The earth is all before me" (1, 15). This line is, in fact, an allusion to the last scene of Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and providence their guide:
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way. (12, 645-9)

Wordsworth starts *The Prelude* where *Paradise Lost* ends, with Adam and Eve leaving Eden with heavy steps. This shows his great ambition to be a successor to Milton by making his poem the sequel to *Paradise Lost*. The world which spreads in front of Adam and Eve, who are banished from Eden and trudging their way, is a symbol of the freedom which they have newly acquired as well as of their punishment.

The walk of Adam and Eve represents the severe aspect of freedom that they must embark on the vast world by themselves outside the protection of God. On the other hand, Wordsworth's walk here stresses the blessed aspect of freedom viewed from a modern standpoint as emancipation of body and soul. Moreover, while what guides Adam and Eve is "Providence," those which guide Wordsworth are "a wondering cloud" (1. 18), "a twig" (31), and "any floating thing/ Upon the river" (31-2). This transformation reveals that the walk in Wordsworth is an act connected with one's discretion rather than with divine providence. In the first book of the *The Prelude*, the poet presents his main theme of searching for his self and his personal freedom through the dramatized narrative of a walk from the city to the country and the allusion to the last scene of *Paradise Lost*.

The theme of recovery of his self and freedom through walking in the countryside also appears in Book 4, in which the episode of his holiday returning to

Hawkshead in summer 1788 is told. It is a village in the Lake District, where the Wordsworth brothers boarded to be educated at the grammar school. In this book, the poet tells us how greatly his first return to Hawkshead after he entered Cambridge pleased him. The following lines are in contrast to those which tell of his first arrival at Cambridge:

A pleasant sight it was when, having clomb
 The Heights of Kendal, and that dreary Moor
 Was crossed, at length as from a rampart's edge,
 I overlook'd the bed of Windermere:
 I bounded down the hill, shouting amain
 A lusty summons to the farther shore
 For the old Ferryman; and when he came
 I did not step into the well-known Boat
 Without a cordial welcome. (4, 1-9)

Although he had come to Kendal by coach,⁷ any signs of a coach are completely removed from these lines from the beginning, as if unsuitable for expressing his delight at returning to the place where he was raised. He deletes from this scene the mechanical drive of a coach which features impressively in the description of his arrival at Cambridge. Walking is the key to entering the Lake District, his native land. He climbs "the Heights of Kendal" with his legs, views "the bed of Windermere" with his eyes from the heights, and runs down the hill. This procedure is indispensable for him to return to his sacred place. There is no space for a coach to intervene in.

In Book 4, Wordsworth demonstrates how his walks in his native land in summer 1788 consoled his mind and contributed to the recovery of his mental strength. He describes the feelings he experienced during those walks as follows:

As on I walk'd, a comfort seem'd to touch
 A heart that had not been disconsolate;
 Strength came where weakness was not known to be,
 At least not felt; and restoration came,

Like an intruder knocking at the door
Of unacknowledged weariness. (4, 143-8)

Walking here plays the role of a warning of the damage stored up in his mind without being aware of it. The restoration is compared to an intruder, because he does not acknowledge that his young, vigorous mind needs any solace. An overlooked accumulation of damage in one's mind is equal to an unnoticed self-repression. As in Book 1, Wordsworth in this passage also shakes off the burden which has oppressed him by walking, and restores his self.

Let us examine another example of the restoration. One night when he is walking from a festive gathering to his home, he sees a magnificent morning scene. His spirit which has been tinged with the excitement of the festival is soothed by this sight and recovers its bonds with nature:

— Ah! need I say, dear Friend, that to the brim
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me: bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit. On I walk'd
In blessedness, which even yet remains. (4, 340-5)

Wordsworth does not articulate what "a dedicated Spirit" concretely means. But it is allowable to suppose that it refers to the spirit of a poet. In the midst of the "vague heartless chase/ Of trivial pleasures" (4, 304-5) of his youth among his contemporaries, walks serve to remind him that his spirit is not common and usual. These episodes attest that he needs walks for the recovery of his mind and the preservation of a sense of identity. Walking for him is an act which reminds him of his repressed self and restores his original strength by removing the repressors which has been accumulated on his mind unconsciously.

3. Wandering and Moratorium: Pursuit of Freedom

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth described many of his walks as "wandering," an

indefinite form of transport. The self-recovering walks in Book 4 examined above are also “wanderings.” For example, he says about his walks during the summer vacation, “when, in these wanderings,/ I have been busy with the toil of verse” (4, 101-2) and “From many wanderings that have left behind/ Remembrances not lifeless” (4, 360-1). The poet’s deliberate use of the words “wander” and “wandering” and synonyms such as “rove” or “ramble” or “lounge” in his text shows that what he expects from a walk is not simply a means of transportation but the pleasures of walking itself. In Book 6, recollecting his Cambridge days, he confesses that he spent many of his college days on “Good-natured lounging” (6, 202) instead of laboring on his studies. He portrays the irresistible pleasure which those wanderings offered to him, though he seems to feel guilt at his attitude of putting his pleasure before duty. Thus, the attribute of walking as an exercise of freedom is emphasized by being contrasted with duty. Wordsworth’s wandering, which evades duty and aims at wandering itself, also conflicts with the carriage which pursues the efficiency of transport. As we have seen, walks in *The Prelude* pursue personal freedom and deny the control of carriage transport, which requires individuals to obey its system. Pursuing such freedom, however, bears the risk of resulting in asking for an everlasting moratorium by avoiding any system or duty in society.

In fact, there are many evidences in *The Prelude* that the poet felt a severe conflict over the theme of freedom and moratorium. For example, in Book 7, at his graduation from Cambridge, Wordsworth decides to go to London to seek for “A little space of intermediate time/ Loose, and at full command” (7, 65-6). In this situation, he compares himself to a vagrant as follows: “soon I bade/ Farewell for ever to the private Bowers/ Of gowned students [...] and pitch’d my vagrant tent/ A casual Dweller and at large, among/ The unfenced regions of society” (7, 57-62). These lines indicate that the poet ascribes moratorium to vagrancy. It is likely that these expressions reflect his feelings of guilt at having disappointed his relatives who supported him in university and wished him to be a priest of the Church of England or a fellow of the college.⁸ Interestingly enough, his appeal for moratorium, or, “a little space of intermediate time” echoes throughout *The Prelude* in various forms.

To consider this problem, let me now discuss the outline of the creation of *The Prelude*. At first, this autobiographical poem was begun as the introduction to a

planned philosophic epic, *The Recluse*. As he wrote, however, he expanded this introduction until at last it replaced the original scheme and became his lifework. In other words, we can say that the history of his writing of *The Prelude* is no less than his wayfaring toward *The Recluse*. In this autobiographical epic, he makes several apologies addressed to Coleridge, who proposed the scheme of *The Recluse*, for delaying so long on the introduction. One of these apologies appears as early as in Book 1:

I began
 My Story early, feeling as I fear,
 The weakness of a human love, for days
 Disown'd by memory, ere the birth of spring
 Planting my snow-drops among winter snows.
 Nor will it seem to thee, my Friend! so prompt
 In sympathy, that I have lengthen'd out,
 With fond and feeble tongue, a tedious tale. (1, 641-8)

Here he confesses that how he is absorbed in the writing of this autobiographical poem, tracing how the mind of a poet was formed through various memories of his childhood. It is remarkable that the poet feels this retrospect is necessary in spite of his feelings of guilt about not yet having launched on the main subject. Although he makes similar apologies to his friend throughout the poem, he does not quit recollecting old memories. Concerning this matter, the following remark by Lucy Newlyn is quite interesting: "Wordsworth's triumph in *The Prelude* rests not just on his inability to write *The Recluse*, but on his refusal to do so" (166). Her remark suggests that the poet was well aware that his apologies were incompatible with what he was really doing. He utilizes his apologies to prolong his autobiography.⁹ In Book 2, Wordsworth compares the work of tracing the source of one's consciousness to that of locating the source of a river: "Who that shall point, as with a wand, and say,/ 'This portion of the river of my mind/ Came from yon fountain?'" (2, 213-5). The poet's quest for the source of his mind continues to the end of *The Prelude*. Looking back upon one's past is an endless work, and we can find one of the origins of the circular nature of this autobiography in the endless-

ness of his recollections. He makes an everlasting journey into his past, pursuing the fountainhead of his poetic mind. Celeste Langan argues that Romantic vagrancy is a product of Romantic writers' "strategic misreading" of the nature of negative liberty,¹⁰ and therefore, "the Romantic text completes the essential tautology: walking is freedom." She asserts that Romantic vagrancy fails to embody the idea of negative liberty, but only achieves "freedom from determination" (20). Her remark is somewhat caustic and pessimistic, but there is considerable validity in her argument, because it suggests that Wordsworth's walk which seeks freedom finishes up as a never-ending wandering, or, a prolonged moratorium. In my opinion, however, emphasizing the ironic nature which is intrinsic in Romantic texts is not sufficient in this case.

Here, we need to reconsider the significance of the fact that *The Prelude* is written with the image of a walking journey. To put it another way, the image of walking forms a leading motif throughout this autobiographical poem. I believe that there is a positive meaning in this point, because the image of walking is especially suitable for the theme of this long poem, an autobiographical journey to find the author's true self. The dramatization of the author's walking in this work reveals the author's construction of the story of his spiritual itinerancy from a coherent motif of walking. The poet's intention to match the form to its theme is clear. Concerning this point, let us consider the following argument by Toby. R. Benis:

During Wordsworth's era, every Briton became immersed in a national climate pressing people to choose: radicalism or reaction, revolution or repression. Wordsworth hesitated before these two equally unattractive alternatives and gave voice to his diffidence through his portraits of the homeless. (23)

He points out Wordsworth's pursuit of his own desire regardless of the political climate and pressures from the established order, in the nomadic and moratorium-oriented nature in his early works. Viewed in this light, it is possible to see the author's vagrant walks and carriage travels in this autobiographical epic as a representation of the tensions and conflicts between social systems and individuals. Considering that *The Prelude* is an experimental work in which the author narrates his history using the style of epic, we can say that the depiction of the vagrant

walks in this work shows the poet's ambitious attempt to grope for a new horizon in literary history.

Conclusion

There is no objection that *The Prelude* is a work well manipulated and fictionalized because of its nature as an autobiographic epic.¹¹ The narratives related to movement such as the walks and the carriage rides are especially dramatized. In writing his autobiography, Wordsworth adopted the means of dramatizing it with the descriptions of the pedestrian journey. It was for him the process of discarding *The Recluse* and concentrating on the autobiographical part, leaving the influence of his friend Coleridge. The words "wander" or "wandering" and their synonyms appear frequently in *The Prelude* corresponding with Wordsworth's procrastination about working on *The Recluse*. The hero's appeal for "a little space of intermediate time," or, a moratorium, in the text overlaps with the author's latent desire to escape from the task of writing a philosophic epic, a task unsuitable for him. Generally, Wordsworth's failure in completing *The Recluse* is not regarded favourably. Paradoxically, however, the failure to write the philosophical epic brought about the completion of the unprecedented autobiographical epic. He regards the walk as a highly private act which opposes the established orders and systems, and he pursues its symbolical possibilities in his autobiographical epic. *The Prelude* is the record of the poet's persistent pursuit of the possibility to stand on his own feet and of the possibility to resist the established values in a time of a political and social upheaval. It vividly shows us the author's inner conflicts between social systems and individuals, between freedom and moratorium, themes which possess great significance even today.

Notes

¹ The text of *The Prelude* on which my argument is grounded is the 1805 text, and I extract lines from *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. Mark L. Reed.

² In Book 7, he mentions his first visit to London during his Cambridge days:
 "Twas at least two years / Before this season when I first beheld / That mighty

place, a transient visitant" (7, 72-4). "This season" points to his second visit in 1791. In the 1850 edition, however, these lines are revised as follows: "Three years had flown/ Since I had felt in heart and soul the shock/ Of the huge town's first presence, and had paced/ Her endless streets, a transient visitant" (*The Prelude* 1850, 7, 75-8). Therefore, there are several opinions about when was Wordsworth's first visit to London. Mark L. Reed says that Wordsworth "probably first visited London in 1788, perhaps at the conclusion of his summer vacation" (195). Mary Moorman concludes from Wordsworth's later conversation with Samuel Rogers that it was during the Christmas vacation in his third year at Cambridge that the poet "paid his first visit to London" (124). In any case, it is certain that he first visited London when he was a Cambridge student.

³ The mail service in Britain was extremely slow and insecure before the introduction of the mail-coach delivery service. For example, it took thirty-eight hours for mail to go from Bath to London through the Bristol Road. Besides, the unarmed carriages and post-boys were frequent targets for robbers (Vale 10-38).

⁴ For instance, De Quincey, reports about the snobbery concerning the means of transport which young elites in Oxford those days commonly had as follows:

The mail-coach, as the national organ for publishing these mighty events, became itself a spiritualized and glorified object to an impassioned heart; and naturally, in the Oxford of that day, all hearts were awakened. ...Under this interrupted residence, accordingly, it was possible that a student might have a reason for going down to his home four times in the year. This made eight journeys to and fro. And as these homes lay dispersed through all the shires of the island, and most of us disdained all coaches except his majesty's mail, no city out of London could pretend to so extensive a connection with Mr Palmer's establishment as Oxford. (409-10)

⁵ Saree Makdisi points out that London described in *The Prelude* implies "the vast colonial network and the experience of modernization" (24) of which that city is the center in Wordsworth's day. He refers to the bustle of Wordsworth's London as "the center of the growing national communication" as follows: "The

thousands of carts, coaches, mails, and diligences which continually poured into and out of London thus tied the national economy together, making it not only into a national, but also an imperial economy" (26).

- ⁶ It is generally agreed that the City in the "Glad Preamble" is a metaphor. Jonathan Wordsworth notes that it is a "compound of London and the walled city of Goslar" (555).
- ⁷ Jonathan Wordsworth notes that Wordsworth at this scene "had come by coach to Kendal, then walked ten miles or so, via Crook, to the ridge at Cleabarrow, 500-600 feet above Windermere" (574).
- ⁸ In Book 6, he mentions his feeling of guilt toward his guardians. He says that pursuing his own way seemed for him in Cambridge days "An act of disobedience" (6, 40) that would be "proud rebellion and unkind" (41) toward those relatives who loved and protect him.
- ⁹ Newlyn demonstrates how Wordsworth utilizes Coleridge in the text of *The Prelude* not to write *The Recluse*, and consequently, how he was "dominated by guilt almost to the end of his life" (194).
- ¹⁰ Langan's interpretation of negative liberty is "the unimpeded pursuit of 'happiness'" (20). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* explains this idea as follows: "Negative liberty is the absence of obstacles, barriers or constraints. One has negative liberty to the extent that actions are available to one in this negative sense."
- ¹¹ For example, Sheila M. Kearns argues that "Wordsworth's sense of his 'freedom' to 'locate' himself wherever he will" at the beginning of Book 1 gradually displays the disagreement with the author's consciousness as "the self that is writing." This remark is interesting because it suggests that the doubling of the self, "the self that is written" and "the self that is writing," which is "inherent in autobiographical writing" contributes to certain kind of fictionalization in *The Prelude* (38-9).

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